

APPENDIX TO PART 20—COMMENTARY ON  
SELECTED SECTIONS OF THE REGULA-  
TIONS ON CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD  
INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Subpart A—§20.3(d). The definition of criminal history record information is intended to include the basic offender-based transaction statistics/III System (OBTS/III) data elements. If notations of an arrest, disposition, or other formal criminal justice transaction occurs in records other than the traditional "rap sheet," such as arrest reports, any criminal history record information contained in such reports comes under the definition of this subsection.

The definition, however, does not extend to other information contained in criminal justice agency reports. Intelligence or investigative information (e.g., suspected criminal activity, associates, hangouts, financial information, and ownership of property and vehicles) is not included in the definition of criminal history information.

§20.3(g). The definitions of criminal justice agency and administration of criminal justice in §20.3(b) of this part must be considered together. Included as criminal justice agencies would be traditional police, courts, and corrections agencies, as well as subunits of noncriminal justice agencies that perform the administration of criminal justice pursuant to a federal or state statute or executive order and allocate a substantial portion of their budgets to the administration of criminal justice. The above subunits of noncriminal justice agencies would include, for example, the Office of Investigation of the Food and Drug Administration, which has as its principal function the detection and apprehension of persons violating criminal provisions of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. Also included under the definition of criminal justice agency are umbrella-type administrative agencies supplying criminal history information services, such as New York's Division of Criminal Justice Services.

§20.3(i). Disposition is a key concept in section 524(b) of the Act and in §§20.21(a)(1) and 20.21(b) of this part. It therefore is defined in some detail. The specific dispositions listed in this subsection are examples only and are not to be construed as excluding other, unspecified transactions concluding criminal proceedings within a particular agency.

§20.3(q). The different kinds of acquittals and dismissals delineated in §20.3(i) are all considered examples of nonconviction data.

Subpart B—§20.20(a). These regulations apply to criminal justice agencies receiving funds under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act for manual or automated systems subsequent to July 1, 1973. In the hearings on the regulations, a number of those testifying challenged LEAA's authority to promulgate regulations for manual

systems by contending that section 524(b) of the Act governs criminal history information contained in automated systems.

The intent of section 524(b), however, would be subverted by only regulating automated systems. Any agency that wished to circumvent the regulations would be able to create duplicate manual files for purposes contrary to the letter and spirit of the regulations.

Regulation of manual systems, therefore, is authorized by section 524(b) when coupled with section 501 of the Act which authorizes the Administration to establish rules and regulations "necessary to the exercise of its functions \* \* \*."

The Act clearly applies to all criminal history record information collected, stored, or disseminated with LEAA support subsequent to July 1, 1973.

Limitations as contained in subpart C also apply to information obtained from the FBI Identification Division or the FBI/NCIC System.

§20.20 (b) and (c). Section 20.20 (b) and (c) exempts from regulations certain types of records vital to the apprehension of fugitives, freedom of the press, and the public's right to know. Court records of public judicial proceedings are also exempt from the provisions of the regulations.

Section 20.20(b)(2) attempts to deal with the problem of computerized police blotters. In some local jurisdictions, it is apparently possible for private individuals and/or newsmen upon submission of a specific name to obtain through a computer search of the blotter a history of a person's arrests. Such files create a partial criminal history data bank potentially damaging to individual privacy, especially since they do not contain final dispositions. By requiring that such records be accessed solely on a chronological basis, the regulations limit inquiries to specific time periods and discourage general fishing expeditions into a person's private life.

Subsection 20.20(c) recognizes that announcements of ongoing developments in the criminal justice process should not be precluded from public disclosure. Thus, announcements of arrest, convictions, new developments in the course of an investigation may be made. It is also permissible for a criminal justice agency to confirm certain matters of public record information upon specific inquiry. Thus, if a question is raised: "Was X arrested by your agency on January 3, 1975" and this can be confirmed or denied by looking at one of the records enumerated in subsection (b) above, then the criminal justice agency may respond to the inquiry. Conviction data as stated in §20.21(b) may be disseminated without limitation.

§20.21. The regulations deliberately refrain from specifying who within a State should be

responsible for preparing the plan. This specific determination should be made by the Governor. The State has 90 days from the publication of these revised regulations to submit the portion of the plan covering §§ 20.21(b) and 20.21(f).

§ 20.21(a)(1). Section 524(b) of the Act requires that LEAA insure criminal history information be current and that, to the maximum extent feasible, it contain disposition as well as current data.

It is, however, economically and administratively impractical to maintain complete criminal histories at the local level. Arrangements for local police departments to keep track of dispositions by agencies outside of the local jurisdictions generally do not exist. It would, moreover, be bad public policy to encourage such arrangements since it would result in an expensive duplication of files.

The alternatives to locally kept criminal histories are records maintained by a central State repository. A central State repository is a State agency having the function pursuant to a statute or executive order of maintaining comprehensive statewide criminal history record information files. Ultimately, through automatic data processing the State level will have the capability to handle all requests for in-State criminal history information.

Section 20.20(a)(1) is written with a centralized State criminal history repository in mind. The first sentence of the subsection states that complete records should be retained at a central State repository. The word "should" is permissive; it suggests but does not mandate a central State repository.

The regulations do require that States establish procedures for State and local criminal justice agencies to query central State repositories wherever they exist. Such procedures are intended to insure that the most current criminal justice information is used.

As a minimum, criminal justice agencies subject to these regulations must make inquiries of central State repositories whenever the repository is capable of meeting the user's request within a reasonable time. Presently, comprehensive records of an individual's transactions within a State are maintained in manual files at the State level, if at all. It is probably unrealistic to expect manual systems to be able immediately to meet many rapid-access needs of police and prosecutors. On the other hand, queries of the State central repository for most noncriminal justice purposes probably can and should be made prior to dissemination of criminal history record information.

§ 20.21(b). The limitations on dissemination in this subsection are essential to fulfill the mandate of section 524(b) of the Act which requires the Administration to assure that the "privacy of all information is adequately provided for and that information shall only

be used for law enforcement and criminal justice and other lawful purposes." The categories for dissemination established in this section reflect suggestions by hearing witnesses and respondents submitting written commentary.

The regulations distinguish between conviction and nonconviction information insofar as dissemination is concerned. Conviction information is currently made available without limitation in many jurisdictions. Under these regulations, conviction data and pending charges could continue to be disseminated routinely. No statute, ordinance, executive order, or court rule is necessary in order to authorize dissemination of conviction data. However, nothing in the regulations shall be construed to negate a State law limiting such dissemination.

After December 31, 1977, dissemination of nonconviction data would be allowed, if authorized by a statute, ordinance, executive order, or court rule, decision, or order. The December 31, 1977, deadline allows the States time to review and determine the kinds of dissemination for non-criminal justice purposes to be authorized. When a State enacts comprehensive legislation in this area, such legislation will govern dissemination by local jurisdictions within the State. It is possible for a public record law which has been construed by the State to authorize access to the public of all State records, including criminal history record information, to be considered as statutory authority under this subsection. Federal legislation and executive orders can also authorize dissemination and would be relevant authority.

For example, Civil Service suitability investigations are conducted under Executive Order 10450. This is the authority for most investigations conducted by the Commission. Section 3(a) of 10450 prescribes the minimum scope of investigation and requires a check of FBI fingerprint files and written inquiries to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

§ 20.21(b)(3). This subsection would permit private agencies such as the Vera Institute to receive criminal histories where they perform a necessary administration of justice function such as pretrial release. Private consulting firms which commonly assist criminal justice agencies in information systems development would also be included here.

§ 20.21(b)(4). Under this subsection, any good faith researchers including private individuals would be permitted to use criminal history record information for research purposes. As with the agencies designated in § 20.21(b)(3) researchers would be bound by an agreement with the disseminating criminal justice agency and would, of course, be subject to the sanctions of the Act.

The drafters of the regulations expressly rejected a suggestion which would have limited access for research purposes to certified

research organizations. Specifically “certification” criteria would have been extremely difficult to draft and would have inevitably led to unnecessary restrictions on legitimate research.

Section 524(a) of the Act which forms part of the requirements of this section states:

“Except as provided by Federal law other than this title, no officer or employee of the Federal Government, nor any recipient of assistance under the provisions of this title shall use or reveal any research or statistical information furnished under this title by any person and identifiable to any specific private person for any purpose other than the purpose for which it was obtained in accordance with this title. Copies of such information shall be immune from legal process, and shall not, without the consent of the person furnishing such information, be admitted as evidence or used for any purpose in any action suit, or other judicial or administrative proceedings.”

LEAA anticipates issuing regulations, pursuant to section 524(a) as soon as possible.

§20.21(c)(2). Presently some employers are circumventing State and local dissemination restrictions by requesting applicants to obtain an official certification of no criminal record. An employer’s request under the above circumstances gives the applicant the unenviable choice of invasion of his privacy or loss of possible job opportunities. Under this subsection routine certifications of no record would no longer be permitted. In extraordinary circumstances, however, an individual could obtain a court order permitting such a certification.

§20.21(c)(3). The language of this subsection leaves to the States the question of who among the agencies and individuals listed in §20.21(b) shall actually receive criminal records. Under these regulations a State could place a total ban on dissemination if it so wished. The State could, on the other hand, enact laws authorizing any member of the private sector to have access to non-conviction data.

§20.21(d). Non-criminal justice agencies will not be able to receive records of juveniles unless the language of a statute or court order, rule, or court decision specifies that juvenile records shall be available for dissemination. Perhaps the most controversial part of this subsection is that it denies access to records of juveniles by Federal agencies conducting background investigations for eligibility to classified information under existing legal authority.

§20.21(e) Since it would be too costly to audit each criminal justice agency in most States (Wisconsin, for example, has 1075 criminal justice agencies) random audits of a “representative sample” of agencies are the next best alternative. The term “representative sample” is used to insure that audits do

not simply focus on certain types of agencies. Although this subsection requires that there be records kept with the names of all persons or agencies to whom information is disseminated, criminal justice agencies are not required to maintain dissemination logs for “no record” responses.

§20.21(f). Requirements are set forth which the States must meet in order to assure that criminal history record information is adequately protected. Automated systems may operate in shared environments and the regulations require certain minimum assurances.

§20.21(g)(1). A “challenge” under this section is an oral or written contention by an individual that his record is inaccurate or incomplete; it would require him to give a correct version of his record and explain why he believes his version to be correct. While an individual should have access to his record for review, a copy of the record should ordinarily only be given when it is clearly established that it is necessary for the purpose of challenge.

The drafters of the subsection expressly rejected a suggestion that would have called for a satisfactory verification of identity by fingerprint comparison. It was felt that States ought to be free to determine other means of identity verification.

§20.21(g)(5). Not every agency will have done this in the past, but henceforth adequate records including those required under 20.21(e) must be kept so that notification can be made.

§20.21(g)(6). This section emphasizes that the right to access and review extends only to criminal history record information and does not include other information such as intelligence or treatment data.

§20.22(a). The purpose for the certification requirement is to indicate the extent of compliance with these regulations. The term “maximum extent feasible” acknowledges that there are some areas such as the completeness requirement which create complex legislative and financial problems.

NOTE: In preparing the plans required by these regulations, States should look for guidance to the following documents: National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Report on the Criminal Justice System; Project SEARCH: Security and Privacy Considerations in Criminal History Information Systems, Technical Reports No. 2 and No. 13; Project SEARCH: A Model State Act for Criminal Offender Record Information, Technical Memorandum No. 3; and Project SEARCH: Model Administrative Regulations for Criminal Offender Record Information, Technical Memorandum No. 4.

Subpart C-§20.31. This section defines the criminal history record information system managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Each state having a record in the III

System must have fingerprints on file in the FBI CJIS Division to support the III System record concerning the individual.

Paragraph (b) is not intended to limit the identification services presently performed by the FBI for local, state, tribal, and federal agencies.

§20.32. The grandfather clause contained in paragraph (c) of this section is designed, from a practical standpoint, to eliminate the necessity of deleting from the FBI's massive files the non-includable offenses that were stored prior to February, 1973. In the event a person is charged in court with a serious or significant offense arising out of an arrest involving a non-includable offense, the non-includable offense will also appear in the arrest segment of the III System record.

§20.33(a)(3). This paragraph incorporates provisions cited in 28 CFR 50.12 regarding dissemination of identification records outside the federal government for noncriminal justice purposes.

§20.33(a)(6). Noncriminal justice governmental agencies are sometimes tasked to perform criminal justice dispatching functions or data processing/information services for criminal justice agencies as part, albeit not a principal part, of their responsibilities. Although such inter-governmental delegated tasks involve the administration of criminal justice, performance of those tasks does not convert an otherwise non-criminal justice agency to a criminal justice agency. This regulation authorizes this type of delegation if it is effected pursuant to executive order, statute, regulation, or interagency agreement. In this context, the noncriminal justice agency is servicing the criminal justice agency by performing an administration of criminal justice function and is permitted access to criminal history record information to accomplish that limited function. An example of such delegation would be the Pennsylvania Department of Administration's Bureau of Consolidated Computer Services, which performs data processing for several state agencies, including the Pennsylvania State Police. Privatization of the data processing/information services or dispatching function by the noncriminal justice governmental agency can be accomplished pursuant to §20.33(a)(7) of this part.

§20.34. The procedures by which an individual may obtain a copy of his manual identification record are set forth in 28 CFR 16.30-16.34.

The procedures by which an individual may obtain a copy of his III System record are as follows: If an individual has a criminal record supported by fingerprints and that record has been entered in the III System, it is available to that individual for review, upon presentation of appropriate identification, and in accordance with applicable state and federal administrative and statutory regulations. Appropriate identification in-

cludes being fingerprinted for the purpose of insuring that he is the individual that he purports to be. The record on file will then be verified as his through comparison of fingerprints.

*Procedure.* 1. All requests for review must be made by the subject of the record through a law enforcement agency which has access to the III System. That agency within statutory or regulatory limits can require additional identification to assist in securing a positive identification.

2. If the cooperating law enforcement agency can make an identification with fingerprints previously taken which are on file locally and if the FBI identification number of the individual's record is available to that agency, it can make an on-line inquiry through NCIC to obtain his III System record or, if it does not have suitable equipment to obtain an on-line response, obtain the record from Clarksburg, West Virginia, by mail. The individual will then be afforded the opportunity to see that record.

3. Should the cooperating law enforcement agency not have the individual's fingerprints on file locally, it is necessary for that agency to relate his prints to an existing record by having his identification prints compared with those already on file in the FBI, or, possibly, in the state's central identification agency.

4. The subject of the requested record shall request the appropriate arresting agency, court, or correctional agency to initiate action necessary to correct any stated inaccuracy in his record or provide the information needed to make the record complete.

§20.36. This section refers to the requirements for obtaining direct access to the III System.

§20.37. The 120-day requirement in this section allows 30 days more than the similar provision in subpart B in order to allow for processing time that may be needed by the states before forwarding the disposition to the FBI.

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## PART 21—WITNESS FEES

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